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CECIL ALDIN

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OLD INNS

THE NEW INN,
GLOUCESTER

OLD INNS

CECIL ALDIN

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD.

First Published, October 1921.
New Impressions, March 1923.
January 1925.
January 1930.

Printed in Great Britain by Eyre & Spottiswoode, Ltd.

To

LORD WILLOUGHBY DE BROKE

because his ancestor's copy of "Patterson's Roads" gave inspiration for this volume

List of Illustrations

In Colours

The George Inn, Norton St. Philip
The George Inn, Dorchester
The New Inn, Gloucester
The Spread Eagle, Midhurst
The Bell Inn, Waltham St. Lawrence
The George Inn, Salisbury
The Golden Cross, Oxford
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The Lygon Arms, Broadway
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Old Coach Notice of 1822
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The Bear's Head, Brereton
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The Mermaid, Rye
Interior, The Mermaid, Rye
The Star Inn, Alfriston
The Anchor Inn, Liphook
The Anchor Inn, Liphook
The Swan, Tetsworth
The King's Head, Aylesbury
The Bell, Stilton
The George, Huntingdon
The Woolpack, Huntingdon Bridge
The White Horse, Eaton Soccon

INTRODUCTION

Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been,
May sigh to think he still has found
The warmest welcome at an inn.

(Shenstone.)

ONCE upon a time Lt.-Col. Patterson compiled a volume.

This, as every one knows, was called "Patterson's Roads," and in 1831 (in the 18th edition) it was brought up to date by one Mr. Edward Mogg, whose name was so closely connected with Soapy Sponge and his cab fares.

Mr. Edward Mogg wrote a somewhat wordy and pompous dedication to His Majesty King George the Fourth, which, as it states the contents of the Colonel's book, and also partly of mine, and savours rather of an after-dinner aldermanic speech, I am taking the liberty of quoting, in the hope that it will give my readers, at starting, the necessary satisfied atmosphere, of being pleased with themselves, their dinner, and their book :

It was then—

"... an enumeration of the antiquities, natural curiosities, the splendid mansions of the nobility, rich in statuary, and decorated with the choicest productions of foreign and native artists, added to the repeated occurrence of an enchanting and almost endless variety of scenery, are, taken in the aggregate, incontestable evidence, that this island presents a coup-d'œil at once grand and interesting, and of which it may with truth be averred, there is no parallel in the empire of any other sovereign.

"That Your Majesty may long continue to

reign in the uninterrupted exercise of your royal prerogative in the enjoyment of these realms, and crowned with every blessing, is the sincere prayer of

"YOUR MAJESTY'S

"Most humble,

"And most dutiful Subject and Servant,

"EDWARD MOGG."

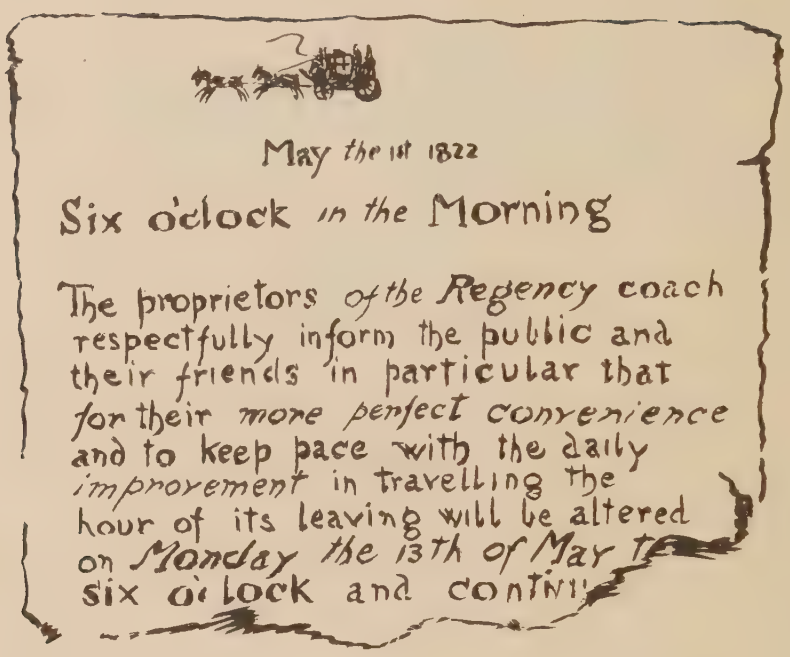
That was the contents of "Patterson's Roads"; but, besides all these wonderful descriptions of the "splendid mansions of the nobility," etc., etc., there was a humble little list of inns where, it was stated, post-horses could be obtained.

These inns—at least, those still in existence—I have visited: not with the hope of obtaining post-horses, but in order to reproduce them as far as I am able in the pages of this book.

I

SOME OF THE LONDON INNS

TUCKED away between the faded yellow pages of my Patterson I found a torn portion of an old coach notice of 1822, which, although in its first line it may have a tendency to shake off the effect, which I hope has been created by Mr. Mogg's after-dinner speech, I cannot, even at the expense of this, refrain from reprinting.


May the 1st 1822
Six o'clock in the Morning
The proprietors of the Regency coach
respectfully inform the public and
their friends in particular that
for their more perfect convenience
and to keep pace with the daily
improvement in travelling the
hour of its leaving will be altered
on Monday the 13th of May
six o'clock and

Just an old handbill that had been used to mark a place in Patterson by some coach traveller; but what memories it recalls!

Memories of the road, of long, low, homely looking inns—all bustle and excitement as the coach pulled up—of cheery coachman and musical guards, of buxom landladies, and of the ever-to-be-remembered welcome of the inn itself.

The oak-panelled coffee-room, with its cheerful log fire and sideboard groaning with joints of hot and joints of cold, has in most cases disappeared, for a road traveller of to-day only seeks refreshment after a forty or fifty mile stage. But in the coaching age we stopped at an inn to change horses and probably refresh every eight or ten miles.

Truly in those days to "set out on a journey" was a much more serious business, not to be undertaken lightly, and it is difficult now to visualize the then vast importance of the inn as our forefathers knew it.

The coaching days, however, were the halcyon days of the inn—days when Boniface laughed and grew fat, and, in many instances, wealthy into the bargain.

We find the old houses dotted along the main coach roads, or tucked away on what my friend Patterson calls "the cross roads of the United Kingdom."

Many of these inns are picturesque in the extreme—some in exteriors, and some in interiors, while others are celebrated in history and fiction.

To go deeply into the story of even a few of these houses is beyond my capabilities, and I propose only to touch them all lightly as one touches a sketch, but at the same time to endeavour to give a little more information than Mr. Edward Mogg, who has very little time to waste on inns, with his list of "splendid mansions of the nobility" to compile and describe, and his intricate mileage measurements to record.

One can divide inns into various classes. Those of historical interest, of monastic origin, inns of fiction, celebrated coaching houses, and those known chiefly by reason of their quaint or original signs; but the types, from the point of view of the traveller of to-day, are the old galleried inns (those in London having been the termini of the various mail and stage coaches), the Queen Anne and early Georgian type (buildings generally on the main arteries from London, and used chiefly by the stage coaches), and lastly the small picturesque village inn, which, if you travelled by the slow stage wagon of the eighteenth century you probably used.

Being the hub of the wheel of the coaching era, from which all roads radiated to every part of England, the London galleried-inns come first. They were a type by themselves, and from such houses as The Swan with Two Necks, La Belle Sauvage, Saracen's Head, Bull and Mouth, and The George, and White Hart at Southwark, numerous coaches started during the day and night for every part of the kingdom.

The London Inns
The Swan with Two Necks
La Belle Sauvage
Saracen's Head
Bull and Mouth
The George
White Hart

In this busy period of inn history, most of the large inns, or "yards," as the London houses were often called, from which the mails and stage coaches started, were kept or owned by people who had also big financial interests in the coaches themselves.

Chaplin and Sherman were probably the two largest owners; the former having at one time The Spread Eagle and Cross Keys, Gracechurch Street, The Swan with Two Necks in Lad Lane, The White Horse in Fetter Lane, and The Angel, St. Clement Danes, at the same time being the owner of some 1300 horses at work in the mails. Sherman had the Bull and

The Spread Eagle
Cross Keys
The Swan with Two Necks
The White Horse
The Angel, St. Clement Danes
Bull and Mouth

Mouth, in St. Martin le Grand, and other inns, besides about 750 horses at work in the coaches, and there are also many other names long since forgotten.

Then there were two very well-known owners of the gentler sex. Mrs. Nelson, whose family was intimately connected with coaching, owned The Spread Eagle in Gracechurch Street (sold to her by Chaplin) and the Bull Inn, Aldgate. She was also a large proprietor of short stage coaches—her descendants subsequently owned the well-known Favourite omnibuses.

The Spread Eagle

Bull Inn, Aldgate

Mrs. Mountain, of The Saracen's Head, Snow Hill, had also a large interest in coaching, and many of her family were closely connected with it.

The Saracen's Head, Snow Hill

All coaches for the Northern roads stopped at The Peacock at Islington, another very well-known house, which might be placed in the same category as The White Horse Cellars in Piccadilly (now the Berkeley Hotel), and the Gloucester Coffee House, where all the

The Peacock at Islington

The White Horse Cellars in Piccadilly

Gloucester Coffee House

Western mails stopped. The vast Piccadilly Hotel is now standing on the ashes of the latter building.

Lord William Pitt Lennox gives the following description of the scene at "The White Horse" Cellars as he remembers it in 1830:—

"Few sights were more amusing than 'The White Horse' Cellars in Piccadilly, in the old times of coaching. What a confusion—what a babel of tongues! The tumult, the noise, was worthy the pen of a Boz, or the pencil of Cruikshank. People hurrying hither and thither, some who had come too soon, others too late. There were carriages, hackney coaches, vans, carts, and barrows; porters jostling, cads elbowing, coachmen wrangling, passengers grumbling, men pushing, women scolding.

"Trunks, portmanteaux, hat boxes, band-boxes, strewed the pavement; orange merchants, cigar merchants, umbrella merchants, dog merchants, sponge merchants, proclaiming the superiority of their various wares; pocket knives with ten blades, a corkscrew, button-hook,

punch, picker, lancet, gimlet, gun screw, and a saw; trouser straps four pairs a shilling; bandana handkerchiefs, that had never seen foreign parts, to be given away for an old hat; London sparrows, as the coach-makers would say 'yellow bodies,' were passed off as canaries, though their 'wood notes wild' had never been heard out of the sound of Bow Bells. Ill-shaven curs, 'shaven and shorn' and looking like the priest in the childe story, 'all forlorn,' painted and powdered and decked with blue ribbons, assumed the form of French poodles who 'did everything but speak.' Members of the Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge were hawking literature at the lowest rate imaginable. H'annuals at the small charge of one shilling; the h'engravings to h'any h'amateur worth double the money: the 'Prophetic Almanac,' neatly bound, one penny; 'a yard and a half of songs' for a halfpenny; and 'Larks in London,' pictorially illustrated, for one shilling. The remainder of the group consisting of perambulating piemen, coachmen out of a place, country clods, town cads, gaping,

talking, wondering, the din occasionally interrupted by a street serenade, the trampling of cattle, or the music of a guard's horn."

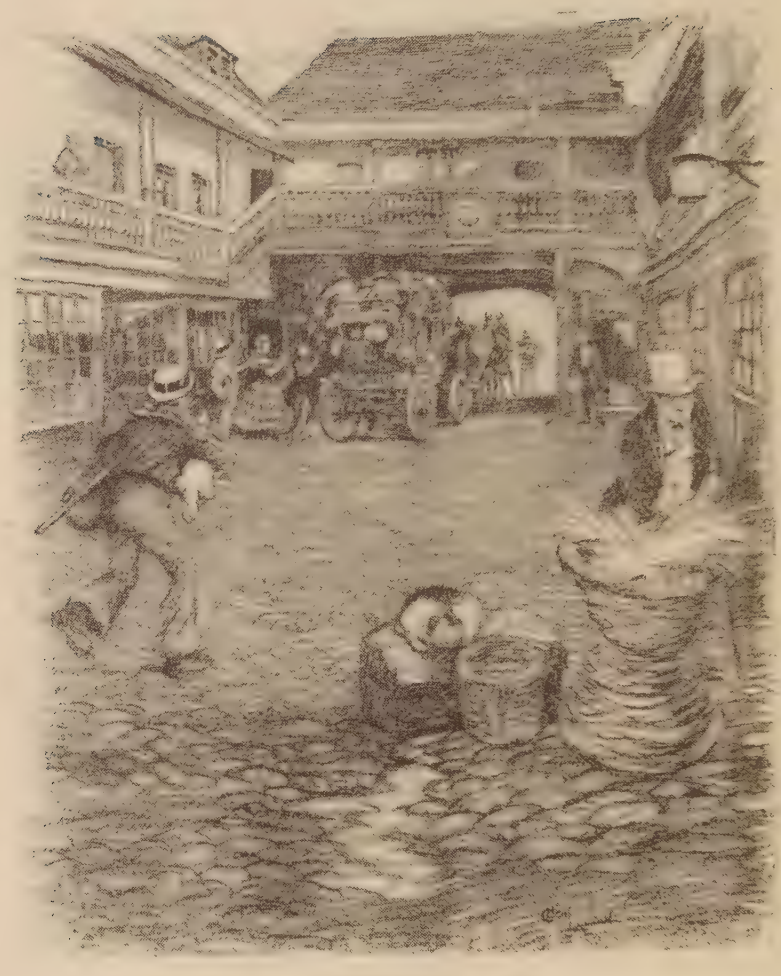
Interesting reading—but whatever stage-coach passengers could have wanted with dog merchants or "canaries" or a yard and a half of songs when setting out on a journey it is difficult to imagine, although one reads that some of the guards had very fine voices and beguiled the stages by giving the passengers specimens of their vocal skill. Rugs and extra overcoats would, I should have thought, been more saleable wares.

The Inns mentioned above were some of the principal London houses, in which list should also be included those of the Borough and Southwark—The Tabard, The George, White Hart, King's Head and Queen's Head, The Bell, and Catherine Wheel, all galleried inns.

The Tabard
The George
White Hart
King's Head
Queen's Head
The Bell
Catherine Wheel

Chaplin's house, The Swan with Two Necks, was probably the largest of all these inns. According to old prints available for reference, its entrance archway was big and high enough for two coaches piled one on the top of the other to

The Swan with Two Necks



THE CATHERINE WHEEL,
SOUTHWARK

pass through, with no necessity for the worthy Jingle's warning to " mind your heads."

Sporting artists of those days, however, did not always get their proportions quite accurately, and, from other " information received," as the policemen say, it is doubtful whether the inn was quite as big as depicted. Allowing for this, it must have had an enormous number of bedrooms, and general accommodation, surrounding its spacious yard—a real caravanserai of the road.

The most picturesque and certainly the oldest was The Tabard, at Southwark; and although in the coaching days more used by the slow stage-wagons than by the fashionable coaches, it had a previous history of very great interest.

The Tabard

The Tabard was finally pulled down in 1875 to make room for modern improvements, and a great outcry was made at the time against this act of vandalism.

The chief argument used by the " preservists " was its close connexion with Chaucer and the Canterbury Tales.

The building, however, as it stood in 1875,

was not the Chaucer Inn of 1388, as it is on record that the original inn was either pulled down or destroyed by fire in 1628.

It is believed, however, that the second plan remained the same, and after later vicissitudes the inn was finally pulled down in 1875.

The White Hart

The White Hart was another very fine galleried inn—and one which Dickens immortalized in the "Pickwick Papers" as the place where Sam Weller first met Mr. Pickwick.

The George

It is sad to think that of this long list of old London Inns only a section of The George, in the Borough, remains standing to-day.

The Spread Eagle
Bull and Mouth
White Hart
Swan with Two Necks

The Spread Eagle, Bull and Mouth, White Hart, Swan with Two Necks, all are gone with their yards and galleries and everything pertaining to them.

Their plan and style of architecture was peculiarly their own, and in their place we now find only ugly shops and picture-palaces. Truly we are a nation of shopkeepers!

Sic transit gloria mundi.

II

THE COUNTRY INNS

AFTER the somewhat cursory glance at a few of the old inns in London, of which a very small amount of pictorial material is available, it is a relief to find so large a number of fine old houses still unspoilt in the country.

Where London inns have withered and fallen, those in the country have survived; and although the tide of prosperity receded from them for many years, the advent of the motor at once made a considerable improvement in their trade.

As the motor-car improved in reliability, so the country-inn trade began to revive, until at the present day it shows a possibility of reaching again the high-water mark of the coaching age.

Maybe it may even rise as high as the flood mark mentioned by Patterson when he says in

his description of Southam in Warwickshire and of many other towns in his invaluable work : "The market day is held on Mondays, but the chief support of the inhabitants is derived from the expenditure of travellers who pass through the town."

It is not, however, of the trade of the inn that we propose to treat, but of the beauty of these old houses. Prosperity, sometimes, brings in its train thoughts of paint, and the advice of the local builder on the question of repairs ; and herein is the great danger that threatens the old inn in the future.

A village builder may be a most worthy individual, but as a rule he prefers what he calls "a nice square 'ouse," and his feeling for the beauty of these old buildings is small.

Mayhap he has a considerable stock of bright green or other vivid paint on hand, which he, of course, strongly advises as a colour to brighten up the building ; with the result that for the next few years your venerable old grandmother of an inn is decked out like a chorus girl, and

becomes an eyesore to all her late admirers. In this matter of paint even certain Trust Societies have been known to be offenders.

The moral of this is that where paint and additions are necessary, owing to increased trade, landlords should be advised to take the greatest care in selection of colours and design, in order (if they have an old house) not to kill the goose that brings the golden egg.

With this little foreword of advice, not made without due thought, and serious cause in a number of cases, we will once more return to Mr. Edward Mogg and consult his invaluable volume (*née* Patterson) for our first ramble in inn-land.

If we open him at page 126 we find he gives the mail route from London to Gloucester, through Dorchester (Oxon), Abingdon, Faringdon, Fairford, Cirencester, Birlip, finally arriving at Gloucester; one hundred and seven and one quarter miles, he makes it, from Hyde Park Corner.

Now, although Gloucester, and that gem of inns, The New Inn, is our destination, there are

The New Inn

many old and picturesque houses that meet us on the way before we finish the one hundred and seven and one quarter miles.

The George, Dorchester

Of these, perhaps The George at Dorchester (Oxon) is one of the most interesting.

Here we shall make our first change, forty-nine and one quarter miles out of London (Patterson), in the shape of a fresh team, probably contained in a petroleum can. This will give us at the same time an opportunity of looking at The George.

As an inn its chief beauty is inside. That is to say, inside the yard, although its bar may have unknown attractions of which we do not treat.

This yard has always had a great fascination for artists ; the late Byam Shaw, A.R.A., used it as a setting for his picture of the Canterbury pilgrims, and Dendy Sadler knows it well ; besides hosts of other wielders of the brush and pencil.

The George is not "pretty" in the sense an artist uses the word, and that is its charm.

Real beauty—not prettiness—in lines and colour constitutes its chief feature, and as you come

THE GEORGE INN,
DORCHESTER

YARD OF THE
GEORGE INN,
DORCHESTER

round the bend of the winding street of Dorchester it always strikes you when at a little distance as *the* inn, in the right position in the village for an inn, an old one ; and finally, as you pull up in front of it, its overhanging gables, gated archway, and yard beyond, impresses upon you the fact that it is a very fine old inn.

That is how it has always appealed to me since our first introduction twenty years ago. At least, that coupled with the delightful old landlord's habit of using two abominable swear-words all day and every day.

It was an incurable habit ; but, after two minutes' conversation with him, his bitterest enemy, if he ever had one, could only take the words as terms of endearment.

He would speak to his guests, and two married sisters who kept house for him, in exactly the same kindly way, every sentence being plentifully sprinkled with his two strongest of strong adjectives.

He had only two swear-words in his whole vocabulary, but these two words appeared every time he opened his mouth, in season and out : when

thanking you for your patronage, or when talking in terms of affection to his sisters and friends, and he would no doubt have been highly astonished had anyone rebuked him for using bad language, of which he was totally and really unconscious.

But this is twenty years ago, and he may have been gathered to his forefathers in the beautiful churchyard opposite long ere this is written, where I feel sure his habit will be judged by what he did, rather than by this colloquial eccentricity.

This, however, is a by-path.

The George

In the yard of The George the gallery and staircase are still to be seen—now, alas! long since passed into decay. The bad times on the coming of railways were evidently too much for the old house to weather, and at that period its stables and coach-houses stood empty.

Now that motoring has come to revive its business it seems hardly to have enough energy left to grasp it, having become a small village inn used by the villagers themselves, with only occasional visits from strangers; and as such we

must leave it to live on its memories of horse-drawn wheel traffic—its memories of the long continuous daily stream of coaches, mails, post-chaises, and travelling chariots passing through the winding street of Dorchester for Oxford or London.

Somehow or other one cannot help thinking of these old houses as if they were animate beings—as if they had thoughts and memories which depress them when the glory and bustle of their heyday has departed.

We are still, however, only forty-seven and one quarter miles (I always like Patterson's quarter-mile measurements) from London, and as we have many hundreds of miles to travel in search of old inns we must dream and dawdle no longer in the village.

Just outside Dorchester the road forks right and left—the left-hand road goes to Abingdon and the right to Oxford. Patterson's direction is plainly the left-hand road, but the temptation of Oxford, as it is only nine miles, is too great. Thrusting down the accelerator, or opening

CORNER OF
GALLERY,
GEORGE INN,
DORCHESTER

THE MITRE,
OXFORD

the throttle—whichever is the correctly horrible expression—we miss the Abingdon turning by a hair's breadth, and are well on the way to Oxford before our conveyance can be stopped and a return can be thought of.

To make a journey to Oxford, of all places, in search of an inn is probably a thing unheard of in its annals. Still, with due and humble respect to its other and infinitely more important features and associations, that is what we propose to do.

The Golden Cross
The Mitre

There are many inns in Oxford, but the two that interest us most are The Golden Cross and The Mitre. The former is difficult to find, having no frontage, and only a coach archway into its yard.

To habitués of the town it is of course well known, but to the casual visitor its entrance may be easily passed by unnoticed.

When one has gone under the entrance arch one finds oneself in the yard. It has many features of interest; the Tudor upper windows especially, on the right as you look back towards

the street, being particularly interesting. On the opposite side you enter the panelled coffee-room, which alone is worth a visit, hung as it is with old prints of bygone Oxford celebrities. A cosy little coffee-room this, that at once suggests coaching times and surroundings.

The Mitre is one of the Hotels where the American nation goes when it does its annual dash through Europe. Apropos of this comes the story told me by a former landlord of The Clarendon in Oxford.

One day during this rush, he received the following telegram handed in at Stratford-on-Avon.

"Please have lunch for six ready at one o'clock, get keys of University 12.15.

"Silas K——"

Allowing, as you will see, three quarters of an hour to "do" Oxford—provided the landlord had the keys ready.

That, however, was in the early days when America first began coming to the Old Country

THE GOLDEN CROSS,
OXFORD

and "doing" Europe. They had so much to see and so little time to see it in that a considerable hustle was necessary. Now they have seen most things, and can, and do, take a little more time in exploring England.

As far as inns are concerned I am sorry they ever came, for they took to America, lock, stock and barrel, one of the finest inn rooms we had, the room from The Reindeer at Banbury, known as the "Globe" room. All we have left of it I believe is a replica of its ceiling now in the South Kensington Museum.

The Reindeer

It seems to take a long while to get away from The Mitre, but as we still have about 60 miles to Gloucester we must once more get on the road, as inns and not the architectural delights of Oxford are to be our theme.

Abingdon, our next halt, has a very quaint old house just over the bridge as you enter the town with a yard paved with what has been described as "petrified kidneys."

Petrified kidney yards, although most uncomfortable to walk on, are a great adjunct to the

picturesqueness of ancient buildings, but how the gouty frequenters of these old inns could have stood this type of paving for so many years is astonishing. Yards and roads however of this type were in every town, London itself having all its main streets paved with them. In the seventeenth century they were mostly of the kidney variety, but during the coaching period oblong and square cobbles were chiefly used.

If you want to see an old inn at its best, the half-light of dusk, when its cruder newnesses are softened down, is the best time to make your first bow to it. That is the time I always try to arrive at one of my inns, and this is the time we will arrive at the New Inn, Gloucester. New but in name, it has a most interesting history, but this we will postpone until after we have dined and refreshed the inner man after our dusty journey.

The New Inn

III

HAVING dined, let us hope, well, and finished up with the cook's masterpiece (no French "Chester" chef here) of hot lemon cheese-cakes—cheese-cakes that have that pleasant backchat of lemon that makes you think of what liqueur you will take with your coffee—you will be in a fit state to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest a short *resumé* of the past history of The New Inn itself.

Everything should come in its right place, and that much advertised "sleepy feeling after meals" we do not so much object to, a little inn history may help digestion.

John Twining was a monk of the Abbey of St. Peter, and about A.D. 1456 he built this new inn, chiefly to accommodate the pilgrims who

thronged to Gloucester town to the shrine of the murdered Edward II in Gloucester Cathedral.

Originally, therefore, it was the property of the monastery. Before John Twining built his house another inn, then found too small for the

THE NEW INN,
GLOUCESTER,
IN 1825

number of pilgrims attending the shrine, stood on its site, and from where this smaller hostel stood The New Inn arose, it being a new inn in 1456. A very interesting old print by W. C. Bartlett, dated 1830, is the only one I have been able to discover, but it shows the opposite end of the yard to that of my sketch. To-day all the half-timber work shown in the Bartlett print has been covered up with plaster, much to the detriment of the beauty of the inn, and slates have replaced the old grey tiles. Although the staircase from the gallery has been altered (but why, oh, why put an *iron* balustrade when it should obviously have been a heavy wooden one?) the gables and general elevation are practically the same.

The heavy beams are of chestnut and oak, and are, of course, those belonging to the original structure.

In this yard in the Tudor period troupes of strolling players would perform in the evening for the amusement of the travellers, and what a setting it must have been for these performances.

As one stands in the gallery one can picture the whole scene—the motley players on the flags below—declaiming lustily to the occupants of the surrounding gallery, while around them are grouped ostlers and serving maids, and all the flotsam and jetsam of a large inn.

Until a few years ago The New Inn was the property of the Cathedral authorities, but when monasteries were abolished in 1855 it was handed over to the Ecclesiastical Commission, thus sustaining its monastic origin until almost the present day.

Now, like The Golden Cross at Oxford, it has no front—only the archway entrance to its yard squeezed in between shops. In the bar, however, is an old picture which, it is maintained, is a representation of the front as it was 300 years ago. If it is, it is a very bad painting of it. For two days I searched through Gloucester Library trying to discover some old print of the town which included The New Inn. All that could be found, however, is the one I reproduce, by Bartlett.

Over the bar, and reached by mounting into

COURT-YARD OF THE
NEW INN, GLOUCESTER

the gallery, is an oak panelled room which is worthy of a visit as it has some features of interest.

In New Inn Lane is a beautifully carved angle post where the words *Salve*, *Salve*—for the coming guest—and *Benedicite*—for those departing—can be plainly distinguished.

In all probability an entrance to the inn was at

this spot, New Inn Lane being previously known as Pilgrims Lane.

The chief drawback at the present day to the New Inn is its gaudy collection of globular "art" pots—to be found in large numbers in the gallery round the yard—and its large collection of bamboo hat-stands. Now an "art" pot of crude colouring may be very nice in the Tottenham Court Road, but in The New Inn, Gloucester, it is certainly overdone.

The very fine virginia creeper might also be considerably curtailed in its wanderings over the face of the building, however beautiful in colour it may be for a week or two in the autumn, as at present during the summer months much of the beautiful chestnut and oak timber work is hidden—careful lopping and trimming would save all this, especially if we remember that there are so many beautiful virginia creepers in England but very few old houses that contain the mediæval features of this New Inn. It was for this reason that my drawing was made during the winter months when the creeper is not so much in evidence.

THE KING'S HEAD,
MALMESBURY

From Gloucester to Malmesbury is but a matter of 28 miles; and at Malmesbury we find a rather different type to that of The New Inn at Gloucester.

The King's Arms, Malmesbury

The King's Arms at Malmesbury is rather typical of the inn of the small country town; not perhaps particularly picturesque—but with its archway entrance and yard is very characteristic of its class, a class whose yard is full to overflowing on market days, but quiet, even to dullness, on the other days of the week.

The King's Arms had, a few years ago, a rather celebrated landlord on account of his always dressing the part of the old-time Boniface; stock, white top-hat, and long coaching coat, etc., reminding one of Bransby Williams or George Belcher the artist, both of whom always look as if they should belong to the early part of the 19th century.

At Malmesbury we have the open-air larder; sides of bacon, hams, and poultry hanging above the guest's head as he enters the inn's hospitable porch, just to give one a hint of the good things to be found within.

Somehow or other one always feels hanging out the joints for all and sundry to see is such a good advertisement for the inn's hospitality.

There should be no difficulty in getting a good meal at any rate, with such an array outside in the entrance. Possibly the advertisement may have been the origin of the idea, coupled with the nice healthy draught which blows continuously on the joints down the covered entrance way.

Be that as it may, we must once more take the road, this time to the village of Norton St. Philip—with its nice old-world name—seven miles outside Bath according to Patterson, and on the Warminster-Salisbury road.

The George, Norton St. Philip

In the village of Norton St. Philip is The George Inn, another gem, although a rather ill-preserved and dilapidated one.

Here we go back again to the 14th century, as it is on record that a licence was first granted to this house, as an ale-house, at that time. Another of the inns of monastic origin, like The New Inn at Gloucester.

Built by the monks at Hinton Charterhouse

THE GEORGE INN,
NORTON ST. PHILIP

in order to provide accommodation for the merchants who attended the linen fairs held in the neighbourhood, it has stood the stress of many centuries. To-day it is very much the same as it was even in 1638, when, in an old charter, it was described as "an ancient and common inn called by the name of the George," and when its rental value was "53 shillings and four pence per annum."

That is what it is to-day, "an ancient and common inn," although its rental value is probably considerably more than 53 shillings and four pence per annum. At the same time one cannot help wondering if the owners appreciate what a beautiful old house it is.

A little renovation—preservation if you like—would save its back portions, at any rate, from falling into irreparable decay.

At the time of the battle of Sedgemoor, which was fought close by, the old inn's great historical event occurred. At least this is the event by which most people know the house, and the one which has been handed down since 1685, and is

now fully and vividly explained to you by the landlord when you are looking over the building. So vividly that you feel he must have been an eye-witness of the event.

In that year then, 1685, the Duke of Monmouth, who was standing at an upper window of The George, was shot at from the street below, so our landlord tells us. Luckily his assailant was not a good shot (or unluckily, perhaps, for the Duke, as he was beheaded on July 15th, 1685, and this might have saved him a lot of trouble). However his assailant missed him, failing to get the bull's-eye he was after—, the money then set on Monmouth's head, dead or alive.

Which all seems rather suggestive of shooting at a sitting rabbit for the sake of the few pence set on its skin.

Then we have the irrepressible Samuel Pepys, who writes of the inn—"having dined very well for ten shillings we came before night to Bath."

Just what I wished to do when I was at Norton St. Philip, but which I regret is impossible to-day,

as most of the old rooms are empty and liquid refreshment is all that is procurable.

Through the Gothic porchway one comes to the galleried yard behind the house, which obviously was built for riding and packhorse stabling only, as no wheeled traffic could possibly get through its narrow entrance.

Over the stables around this miniature yard are the servants' rooms, leading out from the gallery. From the earliest times the plan of these inns seems to have always been the same. A quadrangular yard, on one side of which was the main building which fronted the road, or track as it was then, and which was approached through a covered archway in the centre of the inn itself.

In the days before wheeled traffic was able to be used outside the cobbled towns, owing to the bad roads, these archways were much smaller than at later periods, but the plan of most inns is founded on the primitive-man zareba, having a protective surround whether it be of brushwood or permanent building, with humans and animals in the centre.

At The George we still find "a faire loft where the Lynnen cloth is sold at the Fair tymes," as all the top floor is one huge room, having, like so many of these old houses, the remains of a secret staircase behind the panelling, leading down to what is now the tap room.

This is one of the few inns which has not been really "discovered." As a traders' inn it began, and so more or less it has remained. Even the coaching era of the early part of the 19th century did not apparently make much difference to its importance.

Although a very large building of three stories, it is to-day just the village inn of Norton St. Philip, where a small fee is charged to visitors to see over its vast closed and empty rooms, and wander up its circular stone staircase. Happily, however, it is known to comparatively few, and is completely unspoilt with modern renovations or additions.

At the village shop opposite, a tired looking picture post-card of it was exhibited in the window. Wondering if many people came to see

the inn, I made the inquiry of the owner of the shop. Alas, my fondly imagined hopes that it was not overrun with trippers were sadly dashed to the ground by the lady.

"Many people come to see it?" said she with scorn at my ignorance. "Why, I have sold as many as six of these post-cards in a week in the season"—adding as an afterthought—"I should think everyone in the world must have seen the funny old house by now."

It was a nasty blow, and as I turned from the shop, I felt I had been badly snubbed for my inquisitiveness and want of knowledge.

IV

WHILE admitting that the Motor Union, Automobile Association and similar institutions no doubt do excellent work, and considerably help the hard lot of the present-day motorist, one cannot help having a feeling of annoyance when one sees their familiar large letters plastered all over old houses.

At Epping, I looked a long while for my inn before I could discover it at all, so thickly was it plastered, and completely hidden, by M.U., R.A.C., C.T.C., A.A., X.Y.Z., G.P.O., A.C.U.,

THE GEORGE INN,
SALISBURY

and other combination of letters of the alphabet, and it was only by removing some of the superfluous letters that I was at last able to find its entrance at all.

Salisbury, as a town, has a rather large number of alphabetical signs plastered all over it, and besides these it has a Cathedral, and was once the most important town in England. Furthermore, it has an inn in the High Street, known as The Old George Hotel at the present day, but as The George Inn for the greater part of its 800 year life. The lower part of the façade of the house has been altered, but the upper part is still in its original state.

The George Inn, Salisbury

Many letters of the alphabet can be seen on its front. Of its history, the two Teynterers, "William Teynterer th' elder and William Teynterer th' younger,"—in fact, the whole Teynterer family—owned the house from 1320 to about 1378, when William Teynterer th' younger (how it rattles off the tongue!) left it to his wife "Alesia." (Why, oh why, don't we call our wives Alesias now?)

THE GEORGE INN,
SALISBURY

From an old Print

In 1410 her second husband, George Meriot, died, directing in his will that the tenement called "George YN," situated in "Ministrestret," be sold by his Executors and the proceeds distributed "for the souls of himself, his late wife Alesia, and all faithful departed."

In 1414 the "YN" came into possession of the Corporation under licence from Henry IV, and in 1444, its rental to one Henry Smyth. What a falling away in nomenclature from "Alesia Teynterer!"

Lord de Moleyns was rescued in 1449 from Mr. Henry Smyth's "YN" by the Precentor of Salisbury and Sir Walter Bayle, as for some reason (unrecorded) the "common citizens" of Salisbury had arisen against the aforesaid nobleman.

That is briefly—very briefly, I fear—the early history of The George.

Another item of interest to be found in the city archives is that the bay window which was added, probably one of those now over the porch, cost the exorbitant sum of 20 shillings.

In an old lease of 1473, the principal chambers of The George Inn are mentioned.

1. The Principal Chamber.
2. The Earl's Chamber.
3. The Oxford Chamber.
4. The Abingdon or Middle Chamber.
5. The Squire's Chamber.
6. The Lombard's Chamber.
7. The Garrett.
8. The George Chamber.
9. The Clarendon Chamber.
10. The Understent Chamber.
11. The Fitzwarren Chamber.
12. The London Chamber,

and The Tavern, The Wine Cellar, Buttery, Kitchen, Hostry, Hostler's Chambers and Parlour above the Warehouse.

In 1624 a by-law was passed forbidding strolling players to perform at any inn in Salisbury *but* The George, and on October 17th, 1645, Oliver Cromwell slept in the house, and the

THE GEORGE INN,
SALISBURY
From an old print of 1858

ubiquitous Samuel Pepys (some day perhaps a traveller will find an inn he has not "diaried") wrote about a silk bed and good diet ("and so to bed" might well be worthy of record under these circumstances), in the next paragraph, as usual, stating that the bill was so exorbitant that he was mad.

There seems very little doubt that in 1769 the inn was used as a private house, but at a later date it was once again turned into an "YN."

What an "YN" record! what a pedigree!—the two Teynterers, th' elder, th' younger, Alesia, De Moleyns, Cromwell, and many others, with only one blot, to wit, Henry Smyth, and with a history such as it has, to-day descended to be called by the word "Hotel."

Of this house, many old prints of various dates are to be found, which are of very great interest to the inn student.

At the present day it has a beautiful half-timber upper story, which by comparing with the drawings from these old prints included here, will be seen was not in evidence in 1834 or

THE GEORGE INN,
SALISBURY
From an old drawing of 1834

1858, or in another print of the High Street about 1820.

In the Free Library and Museum at Salisbury, is an even earlier painting of the 18th century, which also includes the inn, showing the plain stucco front above the bay windows. The reason of this is that, some years ago, the present landlady, while having some repairs done to the front of the house, discovered this fine timber front under its overlay of plaster, and had its original Tudor woodwork once more brought to the light of day. A most commendable thing to do.

Unfortunately she was unable to restore the original entrance porch, as we see it in the prints of 1830 and 1858, but I am sure she will forgive me for doing so in my sketch, and for omitting most of the letters of the alphabet hung on the front of her house.

At present, above the porch, the inn is nearly exactly as it was in early Tudor times, and with all the prints available and the main porch timbers still intact, it should be a comparatively simple matter to replace the original inn entrance.

If this were done it would certainly be one of the best examples of a Tudor inn in the Kingdom. At present its exterior is spoilt by the ground floor, and only in imagination can we see the old house as it originally stood.

Years ago you went under the archway entrance into a yard like The New Inn at Gloucester—at The George, all, alas, now done away with—but there are still oldest inhabitants in Salisbury who can remember, if not the yard itself, at least hearing about its glories from their forbears of the coaching age.

In place of this yard we now find a very diminutive, shut-in-by-bricks-and-mortar garden, but on adjoining premises can still be seen the old banqueting hall, which originally was part of the inn. To-day it is an auctioneer's lumber room!

Oh, that some enthusiastic capitalist could be found to restore some of these old houses to their original state, with banqueting halls, galleried yards and imposing entrances, and re-make an inn that all the world, including the American

world, would probably flock to see. It may not be the original, but it *can* be a facsimile of it.

In one house we shall come to later, this actually has happened, moreover with most satisfactory financial results for its promoters.

The greater part of the back of The George is now more or less modern, although there is a fine staircase at one end of the building; but the outstanding features of the "YN" are the two

PORCH ROOM AT
THE GEORGE,
SALISBURY

bay-window rooms over the porch, some of the upper bedrooms, and what is now known as an upstairs lounge.

In this latter there are some carved timbers of interest, and in all these rooms mentioned are very fine specimens of timber work in the walls and ceilings ; in fact, the whole skeleton is there. The capitalist only is wanted to restore and refurnish it with furniture in keeping with the old house.

The sketch I have made shows the two ends of the left-hand porch room, but the lady in the picture is *not* a portrait of the present landlady. I mention this solely as a protection against a possible libel action.

BEAMS IN THE PORCH ROOM,
GEORGE INN, SALISBURY

V

WHEN originally a start was made on what my friends will designate as pub crawling expeditions, all sorts of routes, plans and places were set out, with the help of my friend Patterson, decently and in order. There were to be a serious series of pilgrimages, and definite houses were to be visited in their right sequence.

Our most cherished and carefully worked out plans, however, soon fell to the ground. One stayed longer or shorter periods at these houses, and places not appearing in Patterson had to be visited. Much as I should have liked to have stayed under the guidance of the godfather of my book, it was found impossible ; and after all, a ramble without a definite plan has a much

greater charm than the properly and efficiently organized holiday, a horrible undertaking at the best of times, which always reminds me of the Punch picture of Paterfamilias on a wet day at Margate, surrounded by his wet through and squalling family—"I've brought you out for a holiday, and you've jolly well got to enjoy yourselves."

We'll wander on therefore, never knowing where we are going or how long we shall stay—the correct way of enjoying a holiday—with no fixed plan, but just as the fancy and the old houses attract us.

It has always occurred to me what a grand stage setting these old inn yards would make. Constantly one has seen parodies of them in the theatre—sometimes the grossest libels imaginable—but their effect of distance through the entrance archway, and numerous exits and entrances necessary, I believe, in stage-craft, surely make them pre-eminently suitable for this purpose. Of course there is the stereotyped stage setting of an old inn, but how unlike it is to the original.

MEASURED from HYDE PARK CORNER.	From Exeter	LONDON to EXETER.	From London	THROUGH STOCKBRIDGE, SALISBURY, and SHAFTESBURY.
	168½	*From* Hyde Park Corner *to* * *BASINGSTOKE, Hants., page* 43		
BASINGSTOKE, 4 m. beyond, Kempshot Park, *J. Hamilton*, Esq.; and beyond it, near 2 m. from the road, Farleigh House, *Chas. A. Caldwell*, Esq.	123¼		45¼	LECKFORD HUTT. Wherwell House, Col. *Ironmonger.*
		to * Popham Lane, *Wheat Sheaf Inn*		
POPHAM LANE. Preston Candover House, *J. Blackburne*, Esq.; Preston Cottage, belonging to the same gentleman; and Dummer House, *T. Terry*, Esq.	117½		51	
		to Winchester 11½ *m.*		
	109½	*To* Sutton	59	STOCKBRIDGE consists chiefly of a range of houses on each side the road: it is situated on the east side of the Test, and is a borough by prescription, sending 2 members to parliament. This place derives its chief support from the passage of travellers, being a great thoroughfare, and having very little trade of its own. Near this, on Houghton Down, is a race course, on which Stockbridge races are annually run. The Andover canal passes through Stockbridge, and thereby affords not only a means of communication with several towns, but also with the sea. Market on Thursday.
		To Whitchurch 6 *m.*		
		to Winchester 7 *m.*		
LECKFORD HUTT. Crawley House, — *Bright*, Esq.; Sombourn House, — *King*, Esq.; Sombourn Parsonage, Rev. *R. Taylor*; and Rookley House, *George Lovell*, Esq.		*2 m. farther,*		
		To Andover 7 *m.*		
		to Winchester 6½ *m.*		
	105½	Leckford Hutt	63	
	102	* *STOCKBRIDGE*	66½	
STOCKBRIDGE. Stockbridge House, Earl *Grosvenor*; through Stockbridge, Houghton Lodge, *John Jones*, Esq.; Houghton House, *Peter Green*, Esq.; and beyond it, Bossington House, — *Trelawny*, Esq.		*to Winchester* 9 *m.* / *to Romsey* 11 *m.*		STOCKBRIDGE. Through the town, Longstock House, *J. F. Barham*, Esq.; and 3¼ m. beyond Stockbridge, at Walton, Wallop House, *James Blunt*, Esq.
		Cross the Andover Canal, and river Test.		
		To Andover 7 *m.*		
		Lobcombe Corner, *Wiltshire*		
WINTERSLOW HUTT. Roche Court, *F. T. Egerton*, Esq.; beyond which is Norman Court, *Charles Baring Wall*, Esq.; and Tytherley House, Rev. — *Thistlethwayte.*	95¼		73¼	
		To Andover 10¼ *m.*		
		The Pheasant Inn, *or*		SALISBURY, entrance of, The College, *Wadham Wyndham*, Esq.; and 2 m. distant, Little Durnford House, *E. Hinxman*, Esq.
	94	Winterslow Hutt	74½	
		5 m. further,		
		Cross the river Bourne		
SALISBURY. Laverstock House, Sir *James Burrough*; beyond which is Clarendon Lodge, *unoccupied*; and on the bank of the Avon river, Longford Castle, Earl of *Radnor*; adjoining which is New Hall, *J. T. Batt*, Esq.	87¼	* SALISBURY	81	BARFORD. Hurdcott House, *Alexander Powell*, Esq.
		to Romsey 15¾ *m.* / *to Southampton, through Romsey,* 23¼ *m.* / *to Lymington* 27 *m.* / *to Fordingbridge* 12½ *m.*		COMPTON CHAMBERLAIN. Compton House, *Hungerford Penruddock*, Esq.
WILTON. Wilton House, Earl of *Pembroke.*	87	Fisherton	81½	
		To Devizes 22 *m.*		FOVANT, 2 m. distant, Compton House, a well built modern mansion, of chaste design, belonging to *Wm. Wyndham*, Esq.
WHITE SHEET TURNPIKE. Fern House, *Thos. Grove*, Esq.	84¾	Fugglestone, *or* Foulstone	83¾	
		To Warminster 18¼ *m.*		
		Cross the river Avon		
SHAFTESBURY. Pensbury House, Capt. *Couche.*	84¼	*to* Wilton	84¼	WARDOUR PARK. Wardour Castle, Lord *Arundel.* This castle is seated on an eminence, and surrounded by a lawn and thick woods. The building is entirely composed of free-stone, and consists of a centre and two wings: the entrance facing the north is highly ornamented with pilasters and half columns of the Corinthian order; and opens to a rotunda staircase, universally allowed to be one of the finest specimens of architecture and ornament in the kingdom. The apartments are spacious and elegant, decorated in the most costly style, and embellished with many curious specimens of carved work: those on
		Through Wilton,		
WEST STOURE. At Fifehead, Fifehead House, Rev. *Francis Baker.*		*To Bruton, by Chicklade,* 30½ *m.*		
	83¼	Ugford	85¼	
	82¾	Burcombe	85¾	
HENSTRIDGE ASH. At Stalbridge, Stalbridge Park, Marquis of *Anglesea*; beyond which is Thornhill House, *J. M. Cree*, Esq.; and Stock House, Rev. *H. Farr Yeatman.*	81½	Barford	87	
		To Hindon 9½ *m.*		
		Cross the river Nadder		
	79¼	Compton Chamberlain	89¼	

A PAGE FROM "PATTERSON'S ROADS"

What a background for the actor The New Inn at Gloucester would make, or the beamed rooms of The George at Salisbury!

I sometimes wish I could reproduce for those who do not know Patterson the whole of his book—but then I should be accused of plagiarism, and I am afraid really he does not tell you very much about old inns.

A portion of one of his pages I must include. Its direct simplicity, its road in the centre between two lines showing side turnings, and the houses of the "nobility and gentry" on either side of the road in right- and left-hand columns is an example in simplicity to present day guide-book makers. As I cannot reproduce in the small space available his 700 similar pages, I can only give an extract which will at once show his plan; but if you want to know where all the toll gates stood, and who lived on either side of the road in 1831, you must get a copy of his book.

You get almost as much humour out of Patterson as you do from a certain well-known

daily picture paper, which an artist friend of mine in a newspaper interview once described as, in his opinion, the best comic paper in England.

Then again, we have Patterson's quaintly humorous descriptions, which do away entirely with the dullness of an ordinary guide map.

Take Islington, for instance, of which he says:—"This village, though once described as 'a pleasant country town', is now only separated from London by name; since a continuation of buildings *positively* unite it with the metropolis; it is situated on a nice gravelly and loamy soil, and chiefly composed of the dwellings of retired citizens and others engaged in mercantile pursuits. The well-known salubrity of the air tends much to increase the population of Islington."

But this, of course, was in the days of John Gilpin of credit and renown.

Then again, of Witney—"The domestic buildings are uniformly of a respectable character."

Witneyites must have been pleased to see that in print, and their respectability vouched for and duly recorded by Patterson.

Tarporley is, according to Patterson, only a "tolerably clean town."

Uppingham is a very respectable town containing a "number of eligible domestic buildings," and so on.

One never has a dull five minutes with Patterson. Still, however, we are only at The George "YN", and to the little inn at Woolhampton, between Newbury and Reading, is many miles of travel.

The Pelican, Newbury

At Newbury there are two inns worth noting. The Pelican, a house of world-wide reputation in the coaching days, and a hundred yards farther along the London road towards Reading The King's Arms, once a well-known posting-house.

It was of The Pelican that the famous couplet was written :

> The Pelican at Speenhamland,
> It stands upon a hill,
> You know it is The Pelican
> By its enormous bill.

The Pelican was known as The George and Pelican, the two houses, on opposite sides of the

road, being owned by the same landlady—Mrs. Botham.

In those days of road travel a popular host or hostess was as well-known as a favourite actor or actress is to-day.

All the world knew Mrs. Botham, and her house—certainly all the world who ever travelled along the Bath road.

Although celebrated, like Oscar Asche, it was not architecturally an Adonis, but from what one reads of its past history it must have been eminently comfortable, notwithstanding its rapacious bill. That is The Pelican proper.

The George, over the way, was a typical early Georgian house.

On account of The George and Pelican's once almost royal position in inn history I mention it. It is not a beautiful house, but if only as a link in the story of the inn it should have a place in this book.

The King's Arms, Newbury

The house now known as The Dower House, Newbury, was The King's Arms, and artistically it is certainly a much more interesting building

THE ANGEL INN,
WOOLHAMPTON

than The Pelican, which never had any pretensions to architectural beauty. Many of the features of The King's Arms, although on a much smaller scale, are similar to The Castle Inn at Marlborough, which is now part of Marlborough College.

A fine Queen Anne building is the late King's Arms, which to-day is used as a store-house for antique furniture, and no doubt makes a very fine setting for it. One can still imagine the string of post-chaises and travelling chariots pulling up at its door. Like the Marlborough house, it is set back slightly from the road to allow wheeled traffic to pull in and not block what was then the main thoroughfare to Bath and the west.

The Angel, Woolhampton

A few miles nearer Reading is The Angel at Woolhampton, a small but typical coaching house, with a queer sign coming well over the road. The figure hanging on this sign looks like a rather depressed Bacchus seated on a barrel, but as it is considerably damaged by wind and weather it is quite possible Bacchus is an angel in disguise.

The Bell, Hurley

Near Reading we also have The Bell at Hurley,

The Bell, Waltham St. Lawrence

The Ostrich, Colnbrook

and The Bell at Waltham St. Lawrence, both worth a visit.

At Colnbrook, much nearer London, is The Ostrich—called (amongst others) "the oldest inn."

As Colnbrook is a long, very narrow street,

THE BELL,
WALTHAM ST. LAWRENCE

THE BELL INN,
WALTHAM ST. LAWRENCE

THE BELL,
HURLEY

and has a ten-mile limit attached to it, there is plenty of time to see what is left of The Ostrich: internally most of the timbers, but very little else, I am afraid. It is a pity that its outside has not been more carefully preserved, as historically it stands high, although according to Patterson the only two inns where you could get post horses in Colnbrook were The George and White Hart. The Ostrich he does not even mention.

The Ostrich indeed !—After being originally christened The Hospice, and degenerating into its present name, no wonder the house hangs its head to-day.

Of Colnbrook, instead of Tarporley, Patterson might truly have written that it is only a "tolerably clean town." He would certainly have paid it a compliment had he done so to-day. Ten miles an hour, and every yard of its narrow street you splash mud on to the foot passengers, and walls and windows that line your way.

But The Ostrich has a Grand Guignol thrill—besides being the "oldest house."

Once upon a time a former landlord, not the

THE OSTRICH,
COLNBROOK

present one, had a nice cosy little bedroom known, and still shown, as the Blue Room. Here wealthy traders from London, Bath, and Reading were wont to put up for the night. The wealthiest being always given the Blue Room.

Now in the Blue Room was also a trap-door in the floor which opened into the brewhouse boiling vat, and through this trap-door, upon which the Blue Room bedstead stood, went many of these wealthy merchants, suddenly, and without due warning to themselves.

In this way some 60 odd disappeared and became beer, and the landlord and his wife became rich and lived happily ever afterwards.

That is really not quite what happened, as they were caught, and hanged, drawn, and quartered themselves—but if you begin a "once upon a time" story, even if true (and The Ostrich story is vouched for by one "Mr. Thomas Cole, Clothier, of Reading," who, it is on record, was one of the 14th century brewed travellers), you have to close it in a happy and orthodox manner.

However, at The Ostrich is the Blue Room still. You can sleep in it for a moderate fee, and have your Little Theatre thrills for less than it costs you for a Grand Guignol stall.

The boiling vat brewhouse has been done away with, but if you have any imagination at all, you will see the whole of the sixty odd murders (after reading Ye Old Ostrich booklet (menu on back), provided by the management gratis,) enacted before you during the night.

Just as you reach the limit of the ten-mile area on your right, past the Star Inn, is an old range of buildings that calls for a halt; and these, because they look as if they should belong to an inn, I have included. Locally known as King John's Palace, I don't think they come under the scope of this book at all—in fact, I am convinced they do not. It's a book of inns, not palaces: but somehow they have the look of an inn's belongings.

If I had been an innkeeper when inns were inns, and horses were horses, I should have had these cottages and stabling, had they been available. I know their history, but am forcing

myself to forget it, as it has nothing whatever to do with an inn, but as they say on the stage, "they look the part" if nothing else. Moreover, it is the last sketch we shall be able to make before reaching London.

KING JOHN'S PALACE,
COLNBROOK

VI

OH, boy! how you did enjoy yourself! You and your motor-cycle, with the neatest-ankled girl in the world perched behind you.

On Bank Holiday, on the Ripley Road, you were out in your thousands, in one long, continuous stream, and The Anchor looked just as it did in the old push-bike age.

The Anchor, Ripley

To watch this holiday throng from the comfortable bow window of the old George Inn was better than any play or cinema ever devised, for the reason that, as we used to say as children, it was all real.

The George, Ripley

Every one rushing down the road, and trying to pass every one else, with a heaven-help-the-hindmost feeling about it all.

THE GEORGE INN,
RIPLEY

On a fine Bank Holiday on the Ripley Road the motor-cyclist and girl are in the ascendant. And, on the Bank Holiday I saw it, how they all were

enjoying themselves!—the boys and the girls, a totally different crowd to that on the Epping or Maidenhead Road on a similar holiday.

The public-house, *as* public-house, was not doing the heavy drinking business of the old days—what the beanfeaster usually considers enjoyment.

Moreover, on the Ripley Road there was no singing. It was all dead keen enjoyment all the same. Each girl with neat feet swung out, feeling sure she had the best ankles of any, and each boy convinced that his "Mo-bike" could beat them all and, moreover, trying his level best to do so.

I have studied an Epping crowd, and the Maidenhead Sunday knuts. In the first, chars-à-bancs are in the ascendant. On the Bath Road, Rolls-Royces and smart two-seater coupés come an easy first. But on the Ripley Road the motor-bike is king, just the same as the old push-bike was king on the same road years ago.

On the Maidenhead Road we go out to luncheon, but on the Ripley tea is the big meal.

A picnic lunch—what the publicans call a nosebag lunch—is what most of the travellers carry, but for tea they foregather. Tea is the *pièce de résistance*.

And what a tea ! Eggs, jam, and cakes galore —ad lib. as the menus state. Here the lasses get down for a well-earned rest for their erstwhile swinging legs and ankles. Here they meet their friends and acquaintances, in fact "foregather." There's no other word that expresses it. Here at the historic Anchor or The Old George (which no one will recognize because it is not now known by its old title) and other hostelries, they TEA before making or finishing the homeward journey.

Now, on the Bath Road, if we tea at all, we do it in small quantities—we have lunched at The Riviera or Skindle's. But on the Ripley Road we sit down to a square tea meal. It is at tea, and not lunch, that our ladies disport themselves and their frocks—for the envy and admiration of the surrounding crowd. Did I say frocks ? If so, it certainly is not the right word—kit is the word: there are no frocks

on the Ripley Road. Kit is what they wear. Many of them in the discarded war-kit—land girls, or remount stable workers ; but cut inches shorter—to suit the prevailing fashion, I presume—than they were allowed to do even during the war.

Somehow or other their kit, whatever it may be, always seems suitable and workmanlike for a motor-bicycle ; and as for ankles, the display on a motor-cycle parade on this road on a public holiday would put to shame the best and more carefully selected stage chorus.

The fashions of the Ripley Road are a vogue in themselves ; they are neither of the Maidenhead nor the Epping highway—they stand alone, neat tailor-made garments generally being in the ascendant. Frocks don't worry these ladies, of frills and furbelows they will have nothing ; but the best silk stockings and Sunday shoes are always put on for the motor-carrier, and on the Ripley Road no self-respecting boy would think of starting out on a Bank Holiday without a smart pair of silk stockings swinging behind him for all the world to see.

THE GRANTLEY ARMS,
WONERSH

At Ripley all the world has tea, at least, all the motor-cycling world. The landlord points out to you, if by chance you should be a stranger, the motor-cycling racing knuts, just as in the old cycling days, host Dibble (still in possession of the Anchor) would point out the foremost

road-racing and track men seated round his hospitable board.

From 6 o'clock onwards the exodus begins—after much discussing of machines, oiling, and petroling. An admiring crowd watch a well-known track rider swing into his saddle like a jockey—as his bus jumps off the mark London-wards. And so the string goes on, one incessant procession of pneumatic-tyred traffic, until about 10 o'clock—when the cripples begin to crawl through. Obsolete motor-cars clank, clanking their way back to town, motor-cycles towing others, or cars being towed to the nearest garage.

Last of all come the walking contingent—cyclists who have buckled their wheels by trying conclusions with other and heavier traffic on the road, and so comes the end of one more milestone, a Bank Holiday on the Ripley Road.

The Grantley Arms, Wonersh

While at Ripley a visit should also be made to The Grantley Arms at Wonersh, near Guildford, restored, but a wonderfully good restoration, and an inn that should certainly not be missed.

VII

EVERY one knows The Maypole Inn of Dickens's "Barnaby Rudge," at any rate, Cattermole's illustrations of it. A heavily-timbered inn of more or less conventional type, with a great overhanging porch. At least, so it appears in the book; but by all good Dickensians the inn that has always been known to them as Charles Dickens's original of The Maypole, is The King's Head, at Chigwell, about ten miles out of London.

The King's Head, Chigwell

Here is "the churchyard opposite, and the large room with diamond-paned latticed windows and massive beams," and although there stands another Maypole Inn on Chigwell Green, and our Chigwell one is not even half-timbered, this,

THE KING'S HEAD,
CHIGWELL

The King's Head Inn, is generally considered the one Dickens had in his mind when writing "Barnaby Rudge."

THE KING'S HEAD (MAYPOLE)
CHIGWELL

The main lines in Cattermole's illustration of The Maypole follow somewhat the lines of the Chigwell house, but I fancy his drawing was evolved more from his own brain and not done from any actual building. At the same time

THE KING'S HEAD,
CHIGWELL

there seems to be no doubt that our inn, The King's Head, is the one Dickens wrote his story round.

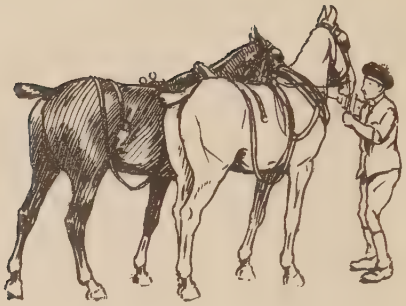
Be that as it may, and apart from its Dickens interest, The King's Head is without doubt a very fine old house, and worthy of inclusion in any book on old houses.

Additions and alterations it has had, but the

"Chester" room—*not*, be it said, named after Orpen's chef—and particularly the beautiful window in it, is worthy of a visit.

The Cock, Epping

At Epping, a few miles farther out, The Cock should be seen. Its outside is not very prepossessing, but it has the cosiness inside which one always associates with an inn; and its head waiter, with the manner of a duke's major-domo, is a study in old-school-butler character which should not be missed.



VIII

AN extraordinary thing is that what strikes one most on first seeing Stratford-on-Avon is its feeling of newness. Somehow or other its old buildings are so clean and polished up for the summer visitors that, to me, the town has always been disappointing.

Everything is so perfectly swept and garnished that it is difficult to realize the antiquity of these old houses. The whole place savours rather too much of a stage effect.

That, however, is only my impression, and it may not be the impression it gives other people. Some of the *new* old buildings look a good deal older than the *old* old and genuine article, but I

am afraid I completely fail to see the so-called beauty of the modern Memorial Theatre; neither could I ever see any beauty in the Prince Consort Memorial in Kensington Gardens.

Of inns there are many, or rather one should certainly say in this case, "hotels," and no doubt

THE FIVE GABLES,
SHAKESPEAR HOTEL,
STRATFORD-ON-AVON

THE BEAR,
SANDBACH

friend Patterson would with truth to-day be able to classify Stratford-on-Avon, as he describes Southam in Warwickshire.

The Shakespear, Stratford-on-Avon

The five gables now part of The Shakespear Hotel are rather interesting on account of their almost identical counterpart with the five gables of Staple Inn. That is all that can be included of The Shakespear Hotel.

The comfort of the house, however, leaves nothing to be desired ; age and modernity being very closely interwoven in the interior.

The Bear, Sandbach

At Sandbach in Cheshire is a quaint little inn known as The Bear.

After the cleanliness of the Stratford inns perhaps the outside of it goes to rather the other extreme ; but its unique shape, standing at one side of the large cobbled square, makes it of interest more perhaps as a curiosity than as a beautiful house.

It is doubtful if it was ever more than a small village inn when Sandbach *was* a village ; now it is a town, it is a little public-house.

Here possibly you could quench your thirst,

but owing to its small size it could never have had many of the traveller's inn features.

The Bear's Head, Brereton

From here to Brereton, 163 miles from London, *vide* Patterson, is only a matter of two miles, and at The Bear's Head our long journey north is amply rewarded.

The house itself is not very large in comparison with many of the coaching houses, but it is a picturesque "magpie" building dated 1615, with a very large block of stabling and coach-houses, of a later period, on the opposite side of the main road. No doubt it had a large business in coaching times; in fact, the stabling is much bigger than the inn itself. Certainly it was an inn which was built for a road traveller's rest, and one moreover at which I see by Mr. Mogg you could get post-horses.

On the main Liverpool and London road, before the advent of railways, its traffic must have been continuous day and night. Here the celebrated Liverpool Umpire coach had a change of horses. In one's mind's eye one can see it come swinging round the bend of the road and

THE BEAR'S HEAD,
BRERETON

one can hear the guard's warning to the ostlers on his key bugle, even before the coach actually comes in sight. How different from the present-day discordant hoot of the motor as it appears round the same bend !

THE BEAR'S HEAD,
BRERETON

No "Three blind 'uns and a bolter" here as the team pulls up at The Bear's Head porch, but "sorts" all of them, three bays and a grey, although Brereton was, in coaching parlance,

"the middle ground," the ground where the best horses were not used.

One can see the bustle and movement of it! Passengers who wanted refreshment in the three or four minutes, or less, allowed for the change, squeezing by those who didn't; the stiff hot brandy and water handed up by the landlady herself to the coachman as soon as the hissing ostlers had unhitched the leaders and wheelers, and he had his hands free to take it.

All the while, however, he has his eyes on the fresh team as they are being put to.

"Bottom bar for the near leader, Jim" (all ostlers were Jims). "The bay mare's brushing a bit; put a Yorkshire boot on her off hind to-morrow," and so on, until a "Time's up, gentlemen, please," from the guard, causes a sudden scrambling back to the seats of "outsides" and "insides."

"Let 'em go," to the ostlers, and the Umpire draws gently away on to the crown of the road to continue her journey Londonwards.

Slow travelling, the present generation would

call it; but all the same you had real flesh and blood drawing you on, and not dirty machinery, which one cannot look at without becoming smothered in oil and grease.

Instead of the hoot of the motor horn we had the guard's impromptu performances on the horn or key bugle, and plenty of time to see the country from the vantage ground of the top of the coach, as we pass merry quips and repartee with those we may meet on the road.

But instead of remaining with the landlady at The Bear's Head, we are driving Londonwards down the road behind the fresh team.

Let us get back to the inn.

When I arrived there about 4.30 one winter's evening, I had no intention of staying the night, intending to go back to Crewe and come out the next day. The fascination of the old place in the gathering dusk kept me rather longer than I intended, and made me ask the landlady, who was in an adjoining yard feeding her chickens, if she had a bedroom, or ever had people staying at the inn. It did not look "busy." Her reply

that a doctor and a clergyman always stayed there for their holidays, and that a room would soon be ready if I cared to stay, soon settled the matter. A railway hotel at Crewe did not sound inviting; however, the fact that a doctor made a habit of staying at the inn should vouch for its hygiene and healthiness; a clergyman most certainly should for its respectability.

The only guest—I came for one night and stayed three days—to revel in the luxury of great log fires (it was the time when coal was difficult to get), hot-water bottles of extraordinary shapes made to fit odd corners of your body, and meals cooked as they only could be cooked by a landlady whose "hobby was cooking." Nothing was too much trouble, no dish suggested apparently impossible to procure.

How much nicer it is to be an honoured guest in the winter than one of many in the summer months!—a mere number according to your room: the gentleman in No. 4, or the lady in the Cromwell room. Personally, I never go near an old inn in the summer. To my mind the whole

essence of an inn is its feeling of cosiness, warmth, and comfort. A good book after dinner, and your feet to a roaring log-fire—that's when you feel the comforts of an inn. Then, perhaps, ten minutes in the bar listening to the local celebrities giving tongue before you turn in between the lavender-scented sheets.

I wish one day some of those politicians who are advocating small-holdings and barbed-wire fences would join me in one of these winter rambles.

Fox-hunting generally crops up somewhere in these bars.

"Seen the hounds to-day, Bill? They be over your way, weren't they?"

"Yes, see'd 'em fine. Crossed right across our big meadow—fox, hounds, and all."

Then follows a description of the hunt, and later the old hands smoking in the corner join in with "I remember when," etc., etc.

At dozens of times and in dozens of places all over the country, in Leicestershire and the provinces, I have listened to these descriptions in

THE TALBOT INN,
CHADDESLEY CORBETT

©H AIDIN

country inns amongst "country" men, but never once have I heard a word against our national sport, truly indeed now the sport of kings, or of future kings at any rate.

In nine inns out of ten in hunting countries fox-hunting creeps into the bar conversation almost every night in the winter.

In my sitting-room, the room with the Georgian bay built out in my sketch, the print of the Liverpool Umpire still hangs as it did in 1820, a little discoloured with age, a little depressed on account of missing many of its old friends—the heavy furniture—from the room. There, however, it still hangs, like an old man whose friends have died off and disappeared one by one, leaving him only to dream of the past.

At Chaddesley Corbet in Worcestershire, which is, according to Patterson, $121\frac{1}{4}$ miles from London and $40\frac{3}{4}$ miles from Shrewsbury, I found The Talbot Inn. The Talbot has many features that are uncommon, with two quaint porches at either end of the 16th-century building. The Talbot, Chaddesley Corbet

Like many of these old houses, the original

structure does not now all remain inn property, a part, that is the right-hand porch and building beyond it, being let off as a separate cottage; but it is obvious to even the casual observer that the whole building was at no very distant date included in the inn.

These two porches are rather unique. I have come across nothing similar in my inn journeyings. But the left-hand one has had to be considerably repaired, and a good deal of it is more or less modern, the original plaster and timbers having in all probability given way.

On a summer's evening these porches must have made a very pleasant resting-place while one waited for the mail, stage, or wagon. Now we rest in them while waiting for the motor-bus!

Here, as Pepys would say, "I dined well for ten shillings," which sum, by the by, included bed, breakfast, early morning tea, and garage fee. It was sheer robbery, but all the price that was asked by mine host. Generous tipping under these circumstances becomes a pleasure, even if it is only to ease your conscience.

I really don't know why we live in houses of our own when we can get other people to take over all the domestic worries and troubles of catering, to say nothing of the inevitable servant question, and at the same time keep us much cheaper than we can keep ourselves.

The charm of "inning" is the glorious uncertainty of it; at any rate the uncertainty of "inning" in the winter, late autumn, and early spring. In the summer probably it is different—things are ready for you, you know that at each place you visit you will get a meal, even if you have to wait in a queue to get it and be one of a crowd instead of *the* guest.

Apart from its inn, the village of Chaddesley Corbet is a very picturesque one. It also has its moated house within a mile, if you like gazing at moated granges; this one, by the by, being rather exciting, full of priest-holes and secret hiding-places.

Why is it that so many of these old inns have the bottom step of the staircases by which you ascend to your bedroom, eighteen inches deep,

and the remainder only the usual six or eight inches? It certainly tests whether you have partaken of the wine that is red or the beer that is golden, too generously. That may possibly be the reason for it.

As a warning I may mention there is a very deep step at The Talbot, and also one at The Mermaid at Rye. Motorists and golfers beware.

How those old fellows who *did* go to bed—"happy"—ever managed to negotiate these bottom steps has always been a puzzle to me.

The King's Arms, Ombersley

From Chaddesley, a short eight-mile run brings us to Ombersley, where there is another very fine Tudor inn—The King's Arms, with a delightful shop window next door—a shop window which must be quite as old as its companion the inn, and which is full of wonderful things for sale, just giving the necessary colour to the picture.

I sketched them all day, but never could find out what they were, whether oranges, red flannel, or blue sugar paper, but no doubt the proprietor does a prosperous business with them, and we

THE KING'S HEAD,
OMBERSLEY

take off our hats to him for giving us so much "colour," which I am afraid I have but miserably been able to reproduce.

Some day I want to do a book on village shops—the sort of shops where they sell those

THE KING'S ARMS,
OMBERSLEY

comfortable woollen slippers one used to buy years ago. They were made in inch square checks, red and white, black and white, or blue and

white—the abomination of my wife and the envy of all my male friends. List slippers, I think, is their professional name.

There was only one shop where you could buy them; a shop like this one at Ombersley, a little place in Brentford, where the barges come from. Brentford skippers and myself, were, I believe, the chief slipper customers. If only I could find another shop—this old one has long since disappeared—I would buy the whole stock, but I am afraid the making of list slippers is a forgotten art.

This, however, is not of inns, although these slippers go wonderfully well in them.

Like Chaddesley, Ombersley, apart from its Tudor inn, is worth a visit—a broad street with some very interesting buildings.

The Halfway House, Ombersley

About a quarter of a mile outside the village is a small inn called The Halfway House. It is of interest on account of much of its timber being paint instead of wood. Evidently the decorator who painted it thought, as black and white half-timber buildings were so fashionable

in the district, this inn ought to be in the fashion. Or it may have been that the owner was a little jealous of The King's Arms in the village. At any rate sham timbers have been painted over the already white-painted brick-work, and to-day the inn stands apparently a half-timber building. Although a fake, as far as the front of the house is concerned, it is a picturesque one. Apparently the fashion in black and white houses is like the fashion in pearls—

THE HALFWAY HOUSE,
OMBERSLEY

THE BELL INN,
TEWKESBURY

GABLES AT TEWKESBURY

if you can't own the genuine article, you get an imitation, difficult, except at close quarters, to discover.

From Ombersley I journeyed on to Tewkesbury, and to The Bell Inn.

The Bell Inn, Tewkesbury.

This is a house, like The Maypole at Chigwell, that is celebrated in fiction. At least so we are told in a notice affixed outside; but to my shame I must admit to not having read "John Halifax, Gentleman," the well-known novel which helps to give

UPPER PART OF THE
BERKELEY ARMS,
TEWKESBURY

the inn its celebrity. The upper story of The Berkeley Arms should also be seen.

The Lygon Arms, Broadway

At The Lygon Arms, Broadway, we have the

THE LYGON ARMS,
BROADWAY

old inn "de luxe." Here, in a beautiful setting, we find the creature comforts of a modern hotel, together with odd nooks and corners most carefully tended and preserved. In 1775 the immortal Dr. Samuel Johnson told us : "There is nothing that has yet been contrived by man by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn"—remarks most certainly applicable to The Lygon Arms to-day. In the winter you sit in front of large open fire-places—free from draughts and well lit—a thing that cannot always be said of the majority of these chimney corners where, I am bound to admit, you usually get your feet scorched and the back of your neck frozen, or find yourself unable to see to read when sitting by the fire on account of inadequate lighting arrangements.

At The Lygon Arms all this has been altered ; central heating and electric light—both unobtrusively hidden—save you from cold and darkness, while the old world effect of the inn remains.

Treasured pieces of furniture surround you

which are never disposed of, even to the ubiquitous American.

I made many attempts to sketch The Lygon Arms—all of which were discarded with the

THE LYGON ARMS,
BROADWAY

exception of the one reproduced here. To me, the inn *is* Broadway. Its feeling of bigness makes it look like a parent to the wide streeted

village with its background of purple hills, and any sketches of the inn without its family and surroundings failed to give me the feeling I had for the house. Only a sketch of the whole village itself seemed to give what I wanted, with the parent house and the family of smaller houses clustered round it.

In the visitors book at The Lygon Arms (or to give it its original title, The Whyte Harte Inn) we find many distinguished names; almost everyone who is anyone seems to have stayed at the inn at one time or another, but the delightful little sketch of the late Phil May's, which hangs in the ante-room at the entrance, will always bring a smile to the most dyspeptic disposition.

"Phil," to use the name by which every one knew him, went to Broadway for rest and quietness, and drew this picture of quiet Broadway, full of barrel organs, German bands, street hawkers; certainly a libel to-day.

I don't think sleepy Broadway could ever have been as noisy as poor Phil depicted it.

The last time I met him, habited in the

gayest of gay check riding breeches, we foregathered at Romano's—you always had to foregather when you met Phil—and at the bar stood the usual daily collection of loungers then always to be found there.

As we passed down their line to the far end every head was turned towards us with a "Good morning, Phil," and as all the habitués of the bar greeted him, Phil "stood" the expected cigar or drink. When we finally arrived at the top end of the bar, I asked him if he knew all the twenty loungers well; if they were all pals.

"Know them?" said Phil, "not one of them, but they all know me."

The most generous soul alive; that is how he went through life. Even in Broadway he would go out into the street scattering shillings to the children, until finally they waited outside the inn each morning in a queue until Phil appeared. A man who would give his last shilling to anyone who asked him.

One morning an importunate friend wanted to give Phil a dog. Now Phil was not really what

is known as a "doggy" man, but to appease his friend he thanked him, accepted it, and asked him to send the dog to his stables, then in Melbury Road. Later, when he got home, he left a message with his man that if a dog arrived he did not want it, and the groom could do what he liked with it. Phil never saw it or heard any more about it, and a few days afterwards he started for a trip to Australia.

About a year afterwards his friend met him in town.

"Well, Phil," said he, "how's the dog I gave you getting on?"

"Dog?" said Phil, having forgotten all about the gift.

"Yes. The one I gave you about twelve months ago."

"Oh yes," said Phil, as he remembered the incident, "he's grown a great *big* dog now. You wouldn't recognize him," at the same time flattening his hand out about two feet and a half from the ground to indicate the size of a Great Dane or St. Bernard.

"Hum!" said his friend thoughtfully, "but he was a very old dog when I gave him to you."

The history of The Lygon Arms has been most carefully recorded by Mr. S. B. Russell, the owner, and I cannot do better than trespass upon the excellent booklet on the house which he and his two sons have compiled.

In this I see that Broadway is ninety miles from London, but my friend Patterson makes it ninety-four miles from Hyde Park corner—and the earliest record is that in 1604 John Travise bought the YN, then known as The Whyte Harte, and in 1641, this gentleman was buried in Broadway Church, where a quaintly inscribed brass records the fact of his death. Then the house seems to have stayed in the same family, passing from father, widow, son, and so on, until 1734.

During the troublous times of the Civil War, Dame Ursula Treavis, widow of "John Treavis" (who was a descendant of "John Travise" *(sic)* who died in 1641), was buried in Broadway Church thirteen years afterwards.

She it was who, with the help of her son,

had, at this period, to find food and lodging (at different times be it said) for both Charles the First and Cromwell.

In 1734 John Trevis had the inn. So that from 1604 to 1734, the Trevis,—Travise,—Travers,—Treavis—family were in possession of it, notwithstanding that in the old Broadway register the name is always spelt differently.

Besides the record of the Broadway register we have other proof of the occupation by this family. The Jacobean entrance doorway has the names of both John and Ursula Treavis (the orthography of the parish clerk in the Broadway register must have been at fault here) and the date by the side of their names, A. D. 1620.

Also when workmen were restoring part of the building a wooden apple-scoop, carved with the name "AN TREAVIS," was found among other interesting relics, and in one of the bedrooms, when the paint was taken off some heavily daubed mullions, the initials T. T., probably Thomas Treavis, were found over dates ranging from 1620 to 1624.

In 1767 one Giles Attwood was the landlord, and in 1793 "The Whyte Harte Inn belonged to and in the occupation of Mr. Christopher Holmes" is recorded.

His widow sold it in 1806 to an Evesham solicitor, and it subsequently changed hands many times, until the present owner purchased and restored it in 1903.

All of which is given with other details about the house in "The Story of an Old English Hostelry," to be procured at the inn.

According to the visitors' records, kings and queens seem to have been quite ordinary visitors. All the Georges, King Edward, as well as our most popular Prince, with his brother Prince Henry, have paid it a visit, and of the ordinary "nobility and gentry," as friend Patterson has it, their name is legion, besides art, literature, music, and the drama, all are fully represented in its inn records.

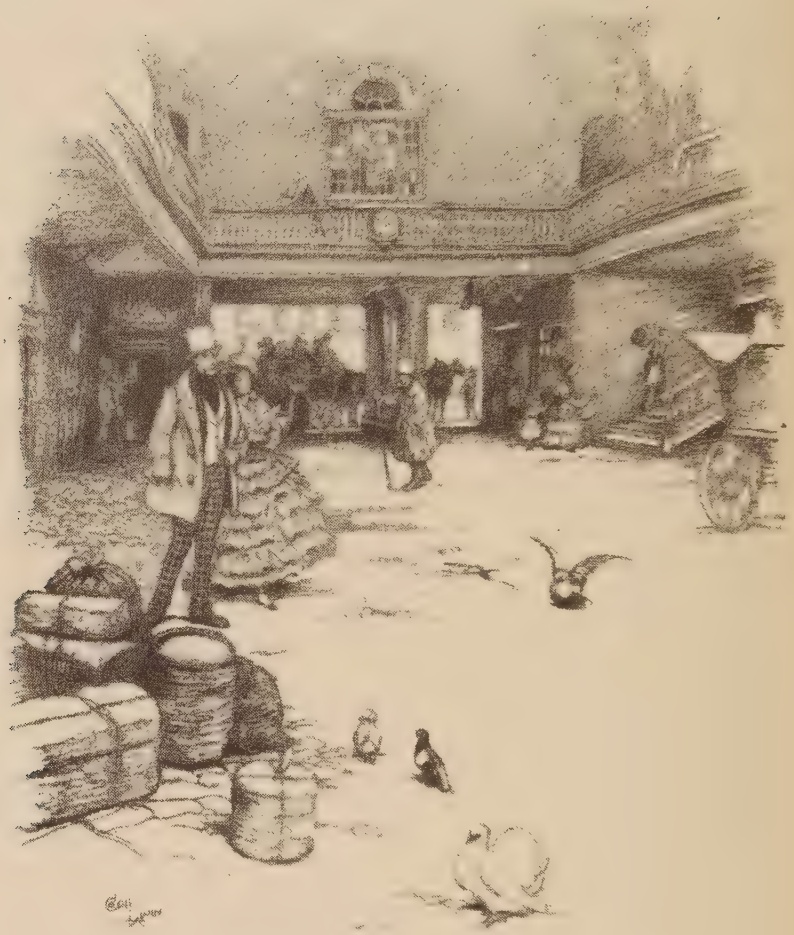
Good food, comfort, and beautiful old-world surroundings make The Lygon Arms the premier country inn in the United Kingdom.

IX

ONLY a few miles out of London, on the Dover Road, is the Bull at Dartford, a relic of the coaching age. The Bull, Dartford

A house that has entertained at different times of its history the owners of many of the historic names in naval history, besides hosts of travellers of every grade of life on this great highway.

When standing in the spacious court-yard, around the gallery of which would flit the busy chambermaids and waiters, it requires even now very little imagination to recall those days of the road, and there is a vastness about the place—a dozen or more coaches could drive into its yard



THE BULL,
DARTFORD

without overcrowding—which gives one a feeling of the immense size of these inn court-yards.

Outside, facing the street, The Bull has a strong resemblance to The Bull at Rochester, well known to all Dickensians—both with their rows of large high windows on the ground and first floors—suggesting the Queen Anne period of architecture.

But the Dartford Bull has seen better days. At present buildings and factories surround it, and it is not now the busy house for the traveller that it was in coaching times.

I doubt if you could get a bed there or a dinner, and certainly you would find difficulty to get stabling for your horse if you had one, where at one time a hundred horses were generally in the stables.

Even the motor-car does not come much to its hospitable doors, the inn being too near London to attract them.

The Chequers, Tonbridge

There is at Tonbridge a very fine inn, The Chequers ; but this, like The Bull at Dartford, is not now at its best. Much of the lower part has

THE CHEQUERS INN,
TONBRIDGE

been altered or badly restored, and it suffered, when the time came for them to be renewed, like so many of these old houses, in having sash windows put in, in place of its original lattice frames.

The half-timber of the upper part of the building is still good, although marred by a large amount of horrible red paint on it.

For all that there is a quaint old-world atmosphere about the place, and at one time no doubt it was *the* inn of the village of Tonbridge.

Whenever I go into Kent I can never keep away from what I call the most beautiful village in England—Chiddingstone. The village proper only consists of about six houses, an inn, and a church; but what more do you want if they are all perfect?

The Castle Inn, Chiddingstone

About four o'clock in the afternoon I arrived at The Castle Inn, intending to tea and then wander on towards Rye, but the fascination of Chiddingstone held me, and my luggage was soon installed inside the house.

There are some few villages in England that

CHIDDINGSTONE

one never gets tired of seeing, and Chiddingstone is one of them ; to me it is *the* one.

I know the reader will say that it has been so often painted ; in most Royal Academy exhibitions you can see it under various titles, but it is so beautiful, and such a perfect specimen of a Tudor village, that even this cannot make it hackneyed.

All my life I have made pilgrimages to The Castle Inn, having seen it under various landlords, but always when I go, I stay the night, if only to see the sunset from the top of the village street, and to sleep in my favourite room, with its beams and quaint little window almost level with the floor.

The inn, although dating back to the seventeenth century, is not in itself particularly "paintable," but the adjoining houses, which for our purpose we must surmise have at one time been an inn, are things to dream about.

This house has so often appeared in pictures as an inn that the deception is permissible, and even if the house has not a licence, a traveller

can get board and lodging there should he require it.

For a quiet rest from strikes and other evils, give me this village and The Castle Inn, whether you be writer, artist, or business man.

"The world forgotten, by the world forgot," is truly the motto of Chiddingstone, and in these strenuous times that is the place many of us are seeking.

The Mermaid, Rye

All good golfers know The Mermaid at Rye —but not being a *good* golfer I only knew her by reputation.

Once in Rye, you step right into the middle ages. That is to say, you need not imagine it, you need not even close your eyes and dream it.

It's just there—mediævalism—staring you in the face. At each corner you expect to see men in trunk and hose, and heavily booted swashbuckling pirates appear to greet you. That was my impression when I started to look for The Mermaid.

I first began to look for her from my car, but inhabitants directing me up the side of

THE MERMAID,
RYE

impossible cobbled precipices I thought better of it, stabled my conveyance (shades of motorists, what an expression!) and looked for the fickle jade on foot.

Mermaids are proverbially shy, and the Rye Mermaid upholds the traditions of her race.

Up a narrow cobbled street, but a street like all Rye streets, so beautiful that you immediately begin to think about house-agents and see if any houses are to let, you climb on the directions the oldest inhabitant has given you at the foot of the hill.

When at the top there is only one house that looks like a Mermaid, the sign is that of a Sea-serpent as far as you can gather—but don't let that deter you—step right in.

Once inside, however, you discover that your surmise is correct, and if you do in the dusk of the entrance mistake the authoress-landlady who welcomes you for the mermaid herself, you must put it down to the out-of-breath state of health you are in, after your precipitous climb.

But the inn is a comfortable Mermaid withal

THE MERMAID INN,
RYE

—peradventure a Mermaid with a little age about her—notwithstanding that she is full of golfers in the most modern of those garments known as "plus ones."

Here also, as at Broadway, creature comforts are carefully attended to (it is a great house for golfers); but also like Broadway, its old-world feeling—every inch of it—is retained.

Often has it been said to me when I have been expatiating on "inning": "You cannot get comfort at your old inns. No bath-rooms or electric lighting," etc. All these things, however, can be done, and are done, if only the owner knows *how* to do them. Electric light, central heating, bath-rooms, are all ugly—plain, but useful—but if judiciously hidden, they can still be there to minister to the creature comforts of man—and woman.

At The Mermaid this is done—done well—and done unobtrusively.

Like many of these old houses, the back view is the best. To say this of a mermaid may seem wanting in politeness, but nevertheless it is true.

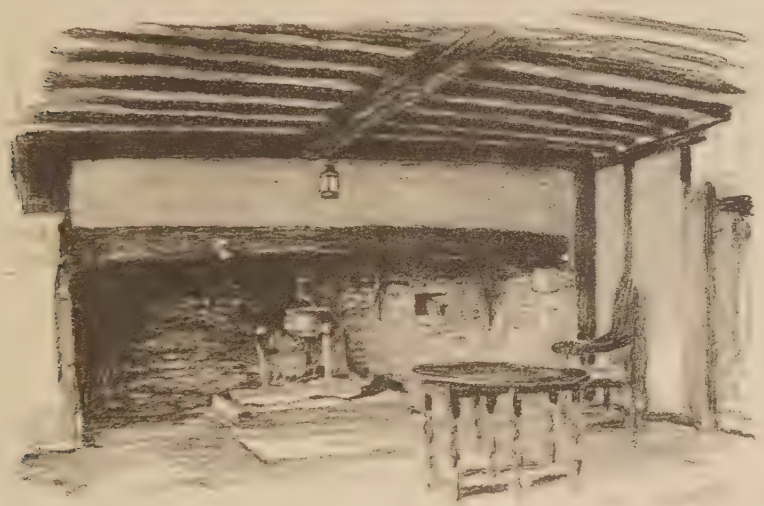
Rather like Bruce Bairnsfather's Ole Bill joke, "I like the one in the gas mask the best."

For all that, the backs of many old houses are often far more interesting than the front that shows, as in many cases of bad restoration or alteration this has been done at the front of the house only, and the back portion has been left more or less unaltered.

Come up the steep path—but they are all steep paths in Rye—from the High Street and you see the view I have taken, with its flagged path up to the timbered building; the way the smugglers who frequented The Mermaid probably came up. That is the most picturesque view of the house—notwithstanding certain latter-day alterations that appear even in the back premises. Go into what is now known as the Billiards room, with its fifteen-foot beam across the open fire-place, and on a winter's day you can almost see the smugglers and fishermen sitting round its fire.

Evidence of the house's Tudor origin is found on the old beams and panelling in many of the

rooms, where we find the well-known Tudor rose carved in many places. In some of the rooms there is also some fine linen pattern panelling, besides a secret staircase, smugglers' well, and steps up and down where you least expect them.



INTERIOR,
THE MERMAID, RYE

Also like The Talbot at Chaddesley Corbet, beware of the bottom step when ascending to your bedroom.

Surely inns like this are English institutions.

They should be preserved as zealously as some of those old houses which have been purchased by the Society for the Preservation of Old and Historical Buildings ; and yet we find, some years ago, that the Globe Room at The Reindeer Inn at Banbury was allowed to be purchased by an American Syndicate and shipped, lock, stock, and barrel, across the "Herring Pond."

All we have left of this unique room at Banbury, is, as I said before, a replica of its plaster ceiling, now in the South Kensington Museum.

And now one hears that the same or a similar syndicate have endeavoured to purchase The Mermaid (I don't think yet the rest of Rye with it) from its present owner, and propose shipping her, the inn, not the owner, to America, together with all her secret staircases, panelling, and chimney corners.

I hope the tentative offer will not become too tempting, but America is a persistent nation, and what she wants she bids for, and if there is money in it, bids for, and bids for again, until finally she may get it.

Some time ago, an Old Inn Society was inaugurated, and one of its *raisons d'être*, among many others, was to watch, and in some cases help, these old houses.

Negotiations sometimes begin ; no one hears of them, and finally, as in the case of The Reindeer Inn, we find our treasure steaming away to America or some other country.

From what I can remember of this Old Inn Society, its tenets were sound—a fixed tariff for members ; free advice by the Society's architects where alterations or additions were contemplated in these old buildings ; together with information in connexion with old furniture in keeping with inn rooms. Every member had the historical booklets which so many of these inns now publish.

Even during the winter months I have constantly met travellers like myself, who go from old inn to old inn, taking a holiday in that way.

An Old Inn Society would help the inn-keeper who studied his house and the comfort of his guests, besides being possibly of considerable use to him with the help of free expert knowledge

in regard to any additions or renovations the landlord might wish to make.

There is so much history attached to Cinque Port Rye, and to The Mermaid, that many days had to be spent there. And what more enjoyable than to sit over a roaring log fire and read the history of the place during the long winter evening? Rye is full of guide books, many of which will have the greatest interest for the traveller and give him all the information and historical facts about this wonderful old town, when he has finished exploring the secret staircases and passages of The Mermaid Inn.

Near Lewes, between Lewes and Eastbourne, tucked away among the Sussex hills, lies the snug little village of Alfriston, and in Alfriston is an inn.

The Star Inn, Alfriston

Some years ago I visited this Star Inn when it was a plastered building with only a small amount of timber showing on its venerable face. But when after leaving Rye for Alfriston I found my previously stuccoed Star wonderfully improved in appearance.

THE STAR INN,
ALFRISTON

Here was a case where an old house—obviously an old half-timbered house—had had, some twenty, thirty or more years ago, plaster stuck all over its beautiful timber work by some goth of a village builder.

A new owner had purchased it, Charlie Wood the ex-jockey; and, all honour to him, he has had the disfiguring plaster carefully removed (as in the case of The George at Salisbury), once more bringing The Star Inn's heavily-timbered front to its original Tudor appearance.

This is a case of judicious and improving renovation or restoration, whichever you like to call it.

The little inn is now a joy, it was a pleasure even before, to all artists, authors and connoisseurs.

Now besides this there is a moral, or at any rate a *verbum sap.*, to innkeepers of old houses.

Although it was still in what are known as the winter months, the house was full—there were no bedrooms available—also they had been full all the winter, and on inquiry I found the American nation again strongly in evidence.

THE STAR,
ALFRISTON

Nothing daunted, however, I took a bedroom out—dined in the inn, and had the satisfaction of seeing mine host turn away two other travellers

who wanted to be put up at the hospice for the night. Here I spent two days sitting in my car outside the inn to read, mark, and learn the beauties of its wonderful and picturesque exterior.

The quaint ship's figurehead, which still stands at the corner of the building, seems in character with the house, although no doubt it was put there at a much later period than the date of the rest of the building.

More especially is this so, as the front has curiously carved and tinted miniature gargoyles at various points of the timber-work. These in some way make the figurehead mentioned still more in keeping.

The Star was evidently of monastic origin, as it has the I.H.S. carved on some of its beams. A date is also carved on the front of the house, A.D. 1520. In fact it was originally believed to have been a refectory. There is no doubt that this again, like The Mermaid, was a house used by the smugglers on the Sussex coast. In fact, tradition has it that a secret passage still exists from the building to some place nearer the

sea, probably the site of the original monastery, which was subsequently used by smugglers.

It may be only tradition, but at any rate, the salt of the sea is stamped all over the inn, and from the figurehead alone, no doubt it was at one time much used by sailormen.

Now, Alfriston is a big training centre, and the parlour and bar are filled with trainers and stable lads who discuss weights and winners, in the place of French brandy and other contraband goods.

Sportsmen all, and more than ever sportsmen that one of their number should have preserved so beautiful an old house.

The Spread Eagle Inn, Midhurst

From The Star Inn to the charming old Sussex town of Midhurst and its Spread Eagle Inn was my next journey. And although The Spread Eagle may not in its exterior make so interesting a sketch as the Alfriston inn, its interior well repays a visit.

The late King Edward must have been rather interested in these old inns himself, as in so many cases we find that he paid them a visit, just to see their homely interiors.

THE SPREAD EAGLE,
MIDHURST

The Spread Eagle has, among others, this honour—as the late King on at least two occasions, when visiting Midhurst, stopped and went over the old house.

Many years ago, when as a struggling art student I was living at Midhurst, the greater portion of this house was let off as cottages. Now the whole block of buildings, and no doubt originally it was all part of the inn proper, has been taken back by the owner, making the house of some considerable size.

The question of which is the oldest inn has so often arisen, and so many lay claim to it, that it is difficult definitely to say, but The Spread Eagle at Midhurst, one of the "oldest inn" claimants, certainly is very strongly in the running.

As far as I can remember the title deeds of The Saracen's Head at Newark go back to 1341. Then The Fighting Cocks at St. Albans also claims to be the oldest inhabited inn of to-day, over 1000 years old. The Angel at Grantham originally belonged to the Knights Templars, and would date back to the eleventh century. The

Ostrich Inn at Colnbrook dates to somewhere near this period, and The George at Glastonbury dates to 1489. The Fountain Inn at Canterbury is where the assassins of Thomas à Becket are said to have stayed in 1170, and the Ambassador of Germany eulogized it in 1299.

And then we find some of the carvings on our old friend The George at Salisbury dated 1320, and The George at Norton St. Philip goes back to 1397. So there is plenty of material for antiquaries to work on.

Apart from this, The Spread Eagle no doubt goes back as far as 1430, and there is also authentic evidence that Queen Elizabeth stayed there in Tudor times.

Of a later period, we find a powder cupboard, where you put your head through a hole to have it powdered and greased.

Something, however, is almost always to be found in these interesting houses which shows the passing of the centuries over their venerable old heads.

Relics found in the rafters when restoring, dates

THE ANCHOR INN,
LIPHOOK

on panelling or beams, powder cupboards, secret staircases made by monks or smugglers, all make them doubly interesting to those of antiquarian tastes.

One of the most typical of the Queen Anne inns is The Anchor at Liphook.

Here, as at The Bull at Dartford, we are brought into the coaching age, leaving monks and monasteries far back in the dim ages behind us.

At The Anchor we can think of nothing but the rattle of the bars and pole-chains, and the merry notes of the guard's horn, as the Portsmouth coaches come rattling down the road.

Sailors and coaches, with a few kings and queens thrown in, that is how The Anchor strikes you as you sit in front of it in the shade of its enormous chestnut tree, or wander into its glorious garden backed by the Sussex hills.

One can see the news of a naval victory being brought to London by coach, before the days of the electric telegraph and railways.

"See the Conquering Hero Comes," we hear on the guard's horn long before we see the horses appear round the bend of the road, to pull up at The Anchor.

As the coach comes into view, we see flags

THE ANCHOR INN,
LIPHOOK

and streamers waving from its roof, enormous bouquets in the coats of the guard and coachman, similar to the usual first of May floral decorations of these the gentlemen of the mails.

THE ANCHOR INN,
LIPHOOK

Out rushes the village—and the inn—ostlers, maids, travellers, "tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor," etc., all the inhabitants of the place, cheering lustily themselves, as the coachman pulls up with

a flourish on the cobbles in front of The Anchor; for all the world at Liphook would at once know the meaning of the bedecked and beflagged mail, the cheering passengers and horn-blowing guard. Three minutes for a change from the inn stabling where sixty-six horses often stood, and away the fresh team gallops again up the hill towards Hindhead and London, every village cheering as she passes through spreading the news as she goes. Then the gossip and health-drinking of the crowd of villagers outside The Anchor; the cheers for Nelson—a well-known figure at the house—cheers for the fleet, cheers for every one, which last the rest of the day as further news drifts through from Portsmouth, keeping mine host busy at his barrels and bottles, and the fine Queen Anne house beaming down on it all.

As one sits at this bend of the road one cannot help seeing it. The inn, the road itself, is redolent of the coaches. Of motorists and cyclists, what can this Queen Anne house know of them?

In my list of oldest inns I fear I omitted The Anchor, as I see its earliest records show that Edward II is supposed to have visited it in A.D. 1310, and Charles II on his way to Plymouth at a later date. I say supposed, as they certainly never visited this building, or anything like it, as it stands to-day.

That good and sporting Queen Anne is certainly its architectural godmother, and was herself often a visitor to it when stag-hunting in Woolmer Forest near-by.

Like many of these houses, The Anchor has the remains of its own brewhouse in the building, but it has not so sinister a reputation as The Ostrich brewhouse at Colnbrook. One gets so tired of the long list of Sovereigns, etc., who have visited The Anchor that a really good murder story would be welcome. All the Allied Sovereigns met there after the 1814 campaign, and Blücher, the Duchess of Oldenburgh, George III, Queen Charlotte, the Duchess of Kent, and Queen Victoria all have stayed there; but Nelson is the old inn's popular hero, even

now. As a Nelson house it was, and always will be, known.

Here the great little admiral breakfasted (he had slept the night before at The Burford Bridge Inn) the day before sailing for Trafalgar's Bay, and a sextant still preserved at the inn is supposed to be the identical one Nelson left behind in his haste to get to Portsmouth.

Then in the cellars of the inn we can see the rings and chains by which the French prisoners were secured when they were sent from Porchester Castle to London to be tried; and to the same rings numerous convicts, bound for Botany Bay who had come down from London on the coach—and this does not sound very nice for the inn or the coach—were also secured for the night halt.

Finally, and no inn is complete without him, our friend Samuel Pepys butts in again, for in 1668 he diaried The Anchor, "having missed his way to Guildford coming over Hindhead." And a pretty bad miss, too, to find himself at Liphook, sixteen miles from his destination.

X

ANOTHER of the coaching houses is The Swan at Tetsworth in Oxfordshire. It stands back from the London and Oxford road, like the Liphook Anchor—a very large house, whose glories have now completely departed; but although cut up to-day into various tenements, it still gives one a very good impression of the old coaching inns.

The Swan, Tetsworth

Also, at Aylesbury, tucked away in a corner of the market square and not easy to find by the ordinary traveller, we find a gem of an inn, with a very fine window in its bar.

The King's Head no doubt at one time—before it was almost entirely shut in by surrounding buildings—had a much more prominent position

The King's Head, Aylesbury

THE SWAN,
TETSWORTH

THE KING'S HEAD,
AYLESBURY

in the town market-place, probably being the chief inn of the town ; now it is overshadowed by so many others that its importance is rather overlooked.

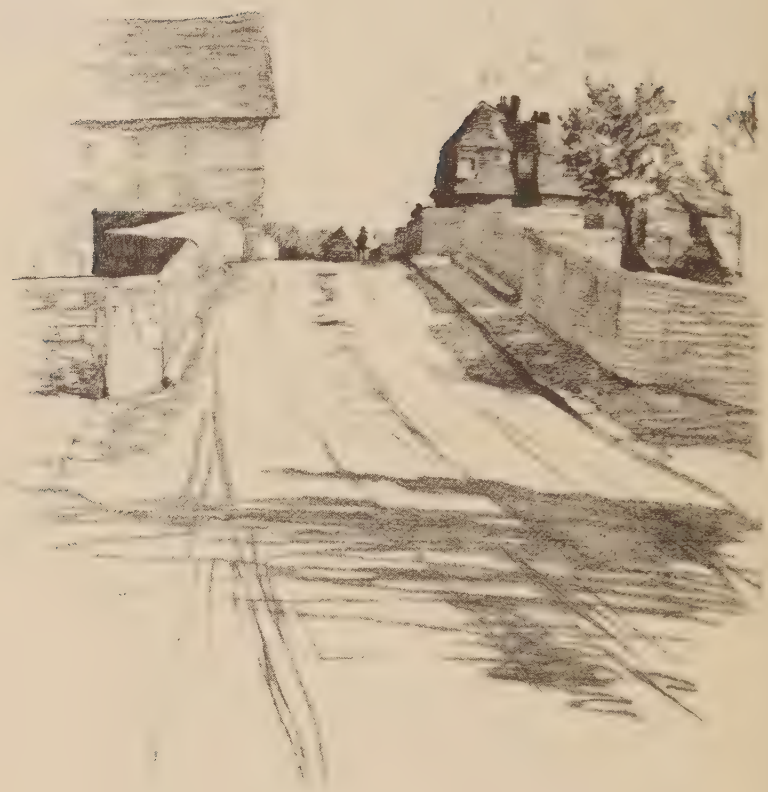
The fine stained-glass and mullioned window is unique. I know of no other inn which has so

THE BELL,
STILTON

fine a window, suggesting more some trade guild-hall of a town, rather than an inn window.

With such a very large number of beautiful country inns, it is almost impossible to touch

THE GEORGE, HUNTINGDON



THE WOOLPACK,
HUNTINGDON BRIDGE

upon them all in one book, however slightly. For this reason I have been forced to omit many that should certainly have been included.

The old Boar's Head at Middleton in Lancashire, the inn at Schole, The Maid's Head at Norwich, together with The Bell at Stilton, The Angel at Grantham, The George at Huntingdon, and The Feathers at Ludlow—all are worth a visit, and to include them all would take a much larger volume than that of these small, and I fear but slight, sketches.

Of the London inns, now almost entirely swept away, a most interesting collection of drawings by Philip Norman, which in 1896 were purchased for the nation, may be seen in the Students' Room of the Department of Engraving at the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington.

These drawings depict, among others, The Queen's Head Inn, The White Hart Inn, The Nag's Head Inn, and The King's Head Inn at Southwark. The Tabard also comes in the collection, together with The George and many other interesting houses, records of which are all worthy of being kept in our national museums.

THE WHITE HORSE,
EATON SOCCON

For the searcher after old inns, there are two or three things he should be equipped with. First of all a good digestion, as one does not always find Lygon Arms fare, or Mermaid comforts. Secondly, a copy of "Patterson's Roads," which will surely amuse and guide him

on his travels; and thirdly, a delightful little pocket edition of "Some Old English Inns," by George T. Burrows, which will give him endless information about the houses he visits, and inn-history in general.

That is all he will require, whether he journeys with a knapsack and walking-stick, or a kit-bag and motor-car. Whichever way he travels, the enjoyment he will obtain will amply repay the time spent on his "inning."

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